

### DECISION RECORD

Decision: It is my decision to authorize the issuance of a ten year term grazing lease of public lands on the Saiz Ranch, Allotment #62027, for 1 cow year long at 100 percent public land. Any additional mitigation measures identified in the environmental impacts sections of the attached environmental assessment have been formulated into stipulations, terms and conditions. Any comments made to this proposed treatment were considered and any necessary changes have been incorporated into the environmental assessment.

In accordance with 43 CFR 4160.2, any applicant, permittee, lessee, or other affected interests may protest this proposed decision in person or in writing to the authorized officer within 15 days after receipt of this decision. Please be specific in your points of protest. In the absence of a protest, this decision will become final without further notice.

Written appeal may be filed to the Final Decision for the purpose of a hearing before an administrative law judge under 43 CFR 4.470. A period of 30 days after receipt of the Final Decision is provided in which to file an appeal in this office. (43 CFR 4160.3 (c))

Signed by T. R. Kreager  
Assistant Field Manager

6/26/01  
Date

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
for  
GRAZING AUTHORIZATION  
ALLOTMENT 62027**

**EA-NM-060-00-069**

**T6N R21E Sec. 4**

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Roswell Field Office  
Roswell, New Mexico**

## **I. Introduction**

When authorizing livestock grazing on public range, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has historically relied on a land use plan and environmental impact statement to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). A recent decision by the Interior Board of Land Appeals, however, affirmed that the BLM must conduct a site-specific NEPA analysis before issuing a permit or lease to authorize livestock grazing. This environmental assessment fulfills the NEPA requirement by providing the necessary site-specific analysis of the effects of issuing a new grazing lease on allotments 62027.

The scope of this document is limited to the effects of issuing a grazing lease for the duration of the base lease. Other future actions such as range improvement projects will be addressed in a project specific environmental assessment. There are no current plans for additional management actions on these allotments.

### **A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action**

The purpose of issuing a new grazing lease would be to authorize livestock grazing on public lands on allotments 62027. The lease would specify the types and levels of use authorized, and the terms and conditions of the authorization pursuant to 43 CFR §§4130.3, 4130.3-1, 4180.1 and 4130.3-2.

### **B. Conformance with Land Use Planning**

The Roswell Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (October 1997) has been reviewed to determine if the proposed action conforms with the land use plan's Record of Decision. The proposed action is consistent with the RMP/EIS.

#### **C. Relationships to Statutes, Regulations, or Other Plans**

The proposed action is consistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1700 et seq.); the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 (43 U.S.C. 315 et seq.), as amended; the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.), as amended; the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1535 et seq.) as amended; the Federal Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 (43 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.); Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management and Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands.

## **II. Proposed Action and Alternatives**

### **A. Proposed Action:**

The proposed action is to authorize Lugarda Saiz a ten year grazing lease for 1 cow yearlong at 100% Federal Range for 8 Animal Unit Months (AUM's) on allotment 62027.

### **B. No Authorization Alternative:**

This alternative would not issue a new grazing lease. There would be no livestock grazing authorized on public land within allotment 62027.

## **III. Affected Environment**

### **A. General Setting**

Allotment 62027 is located in Guadalupe County, about 6 miles southwest of Puerto de Luna. There are 40 acres of public land on the allotment. The lease for grazing is only for the public land and therefore does not reflect the total number of livestock for the entire ranch unit.

This allotment lies outside the Roswell Grazing District boundary established subsequent to the Taylor Grazing Act (TGA). Overall livestock numbers for the ranch are not controlled. The amount of forage produced on public land is the determining factor on the number of authorized livestock for the public land.

The following resources or values are not present or would not be affected: Prime/Unique Farmland, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Floodplains, Minority/Low Income Populations, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Invasive, Nonnative Species, Hazardous/Solid Wastes, Wetlands/Riparian Zones, Native American Religious

Concerns. Cultural inventory surveys would continue to be required for public actions involving surface disturbing activities.

## **B. Affected Resources**

1. Soils: At this time there is no soil survey for Guadalupe County. There is a certain amount of erosion that occurs naturally in this vegetation community. High winds in the spring and high intensity thunderstorms are the primary agents of soil transportation

2. Vegetation: This allotment is within the grassland vegetative community as identified in the Roswell Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS). Vegetative communities managed by the Roswell Field Office are identified and explained in the RMP/EIS. Appendix 11 of the draft RMP/EIS describes the Desired Plant Community (DPC) concept and identifies the components of each community. The distinguishing feature for the grassland community is that grass species typically comprises 75% or more of the potential plant community. Short-grass, mid-grass, and tall-grass species may be found within this community. The community also includes shrub, half-shrub, and forb species. The percentages of grasses, forbs, and shrubs actually found at a particular location will vary with recent weather factors and past resource uses.

A rangeland inventory for vegetation production and ecological range site condition was performed on this allotment in 1991. Analysis of the inventory data indicates that the Loamy CP-32 range site is in fair condition. At a 45% use level, there is sufficient forage available for the amount of livestock listed in the proposed action along with providing for the needs of other multiple uses. Copies of the inventory data are available at the Roswell Field Office. The study data shows that the area is vegetated primarily with grass. The existing vegetation consist of grasses such as blue grama, 3-awns, muhlys and wolftail. The shrub and tree species include one-seed juniper.

3. Wildlife: Game species occurring within the area include mule deer, mourning dove, and scaled quail. Raptors that utilize the area on a more seasonal basis include the Swainson's, red-tailed, and ferruginous hawks, American kestrel, and great-horned owl. Numerous passerine birds utilize the grassland areas due to the variety of grasses, forbs, and shrubs. The most common include the western meadowlark, mockingbird, horned lark, killdeer, loggerhead shrike, and vesper sparrow. Reptiles include a variety of snakes, lizards, and amphibians.

A general description of wildlife occupying or potentially utilizing the proposed action area is located in the Affected Environment Section (p. 3-62 to 3-71) of the Draft Roswell RMP/EIS (9/1994).

4. Threatened and Endangered Species: There are no known populations of threatened or endangered species on the allotment. There are no known records of

these species having occurred on the allotment. There are no designated critical habitat areas within the allotment. The allotment does contain the grassland components that may potentially provide habitat for the mountain plover, but due to the small amounts of public land and the absence of prairie dog towns, a No Affect determination is made. There will be no further discussion of this resource.

5. Livestock Management: The allotment is operated as a cow/calf operation. Actual livestock numbers on the entire ranch are not controlled by the BLM as explained in the General Setting portion of the Affected Environment section above.

6. Visual Resources: The allotment is located within a Class IV Visual Resource Management area. This means that contrasts may attract attention and be a dominant feature in the landscape in terms of scale. However, the changes should repeat the basic elements of the landscape.

7. Water Quality: No perennial surface water is found on the Public Land on this allotment.

8. Air Quality: Air quality in the region is generally good. The allotment is in a Class II area for the Prevention of Significant Deterioration of air quality as defined in the public Clean Air Act. Class II areas allow a moderate amount of air quality degradation.

9. Recreation: Recreation opportunities are limited in this grazing allotment because the small acreage of the isolated parcel and the lack of legal public access.

Recreation activities that may occur on these public lands are within this allotment are: hunting, sightseeing, Off Highway Vehicle Use, primitive camping, mountain biking, horseback riding and hiking. Due to the fact that public land boundaries are not marked adequately or identified by signs and/or fences the general public land user is reluctant to use the public lands in fear of being in trespass on private land. Off Highway Vehicle designations for public lands within this allotment are classified as "Limited" to existing roads and trails.

10. Cave/Karst: A complete significant cave or karst inventory has not been completed for the public lands located in this grazing allotment. Presently, no known significant caves or karst features have been identified within this allotment. The allotment is located within a designated area of Low Karst or Cave Potential.

## **IV. Environmental Impacts**

### **A. Impacts of the Proposed Action**

1. Soils: Livestock remove the cover of standing vegetation and litter, and compact the soil by trampling (Stoddart et al. 1975). These effects can lead to reduced infiltration rates and increased runoff. Reduced vegetative cover and increased runoff can result in higher erosion rates and soil losses, making it more difficult to produce forage and to protect the soil from further erosion. These adverse effects can be greatly reduced by maintaining an adequate vegetative cover on the soil (Moore et al. 1979). Proper utilization levels and grazing distribution patterns are expected to retain sufficient vegetative cover on the allotment, this will maintain the stability of the soils. Soil compaction and excessive vegetative use will occur at small, localized areas such as bedding areas and along trails. Positive affects from the proposed action may include acceleration of the nutrient cycling process and chipping of the soil crust by hoof action may stimulate seedling growth and water infiltration.

2. Vegetation: Vegetation will continue to be grazed and trampled by domestic livestock as well as other herbivores. The area has been grazed by livestock since the early part of the 1900's, if not longer. Ecological condition and trend is expected to remain stable and/or improve over the long term with the proposed authorized number of livestock and existing pasture management. Rangeland vegetation inventory data indicates that there is an adequate amount of forage for the proposed number of livestock and for wildlife.

3. Wildlife: Domestic livestock will continue to utilize vegetative resources needed by a variety of wildlife species for life history functions within these allotments. The magnitude of livestock grazing impacts on wildlife is dependent upon the species of wildlife being considered, and it's habitat needs. In general, livestock stocking rate adjustments have been made in the past to minimize the direct competition for those vegetative resources needed by a variety of wildlife species. Cover habitat for wildlife will remain the same as the existing situation. Maintenance and operation of existing water locations will continue to provide dependable water sources for wildlife, as well as livestock.

4. Livestock Management: Livestock would continue to be grazed under the same management system and the same numbers as authorized under the expiring lease. No adverse impacts are anticipated under the proposed action.

5. Visual Resources: The continued grazing of livestock would not affect the form or color of the landscape. The primary appearance of the vegetation within the allotment will remain the same.

6. Water Quality : Direct impacts to surface water quality would be minor, short-term impacts during storm event. Indirect impacts to water-quality related resources, such as fisheries, would not occur. The proposed action would not have a significant effect on ground water. Livestock would be dispersed over the allotment, and the soil would filter potential contaminants.

7. Air Quality: Dust levels under the proposed action would be slightly higher than under the no grazing alternative due to allotment management activities. The levels would still be within the limits allowed in a Class II area for the Prevention of Significant Deterioration of air quality.

8. Recreation: Grazing would have little or no affect on the recreational opportunities, since the recreating public has limited legal or physical access to the public lands. Recreation activities that could occur within this grazing allotment are limited or non-existent due to land status patterns and lack of public access.

9. Caves/Karst: No known significant caves or karst features are known to exist on the public lands located within this allotment. Grazing would not affect the karst resources.

## **B. Impacts of the No Livestock Grazing Alternative.**

1. Soils: Soil compaction would be reduced on the allotment around old trails and bedding grounds, there would be a small reduction in soil loss on the allotment.

2. Vegetation: It is expected that the number of plant species found within the allotment will remain the same, however, there would be small changes in the relative percentages of these species. Vegetation will continue to be utilized by wildlife. There would be an increase in the amount of standing vegetation.

3. Wildlife: Wildlife would have no competition with livestock for forage and cover.

4. Livestock management: The forage from public land would be unavailable for use by the lessee. This would have a adverse economic impact to the livestock operation. If the No Grazing alternative is selected, the owner of the livestock would be responsible for ensuring that livestock do not enter Public Land [43 CFR 4140.1(b)(1)]. The land status pattern on the allotment makes it economically unfeasible to fence out the public land and use only the private land and state land.

5. Visual Resources: There would be no change in the visual resources.

6. Water Quality: There could be a slight improvement in water quality due to the minor reductions in sediment loading during storm events.

7. Air Quality: There would be a slightly less dust under this under this alternative versus the proposed alternative, but this would be negligible when considering all sources of dust.

8. Recreation: Impacts would be the same as the proposed action.
9. Caves/Karst: Impacts would be the same as the proposed action.

## **V. Cumulative Impacts**

All of the allotments that have permits/leases with the BLM will have to go through scoping and analysis under NEPA. Allotment 62027 is near allotments that will be undergoing this process. If the proposed action is selected, there would be no change in the cumulative impacts since it does not vary from the current situation.

If the no livestock grazing alternative is selected, there would be little change in the cumulative impact as long as the surrounding allotments continue to be stocked at their current level. If the no grazing alternative is selected on the surrounding ranches as well, the economics of the surrounding communities and/or minority/low income populations would be negatively impacted.

The No Grazing alternative was considered, but not chosen in the Rangeland Reform Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Record of Decision (ROD) (p. 28). The elimination of grazing in the Roswell Field Office Area was also considered but eliminated by the Roswell RMP/ROD (pp. ROD-2).

## **VI. Residual Impacts**

Vegetative monitoring studies have shown that grazing, at the current leased numbers of animals, is sustainable. If the mitigation measures are enacted, then there would be no residual impacts to the proposed action.



## **VII. Mitigating Measures**

Vegetation monitoring studies will continue to be conducted and the leased numbers of livestock will be adjusted if necessary. If new information surfaces that livestock grazing is negatively impacting other resources, action will be taken at that time to mitigate those impacts.

## **VIII. Literature Cited**

Moore, E., E. Janes, F. Kinsinger, K Pitney, and J. Sainsbury. 1979. Livestock grazing management and water quality protection - state of the art reference document. EPA 910/9-79-67. Envir. Prot. Agen. Seattle, WA 147 pp.

Stoddart, L.A., A.D. Smith, and T.W. Box. 1975. Range Management. Third Ed. McGraw-Hill, Inc., New York. 532 pp.

## **IX. Fundamentals of Rangeland Health**

The fundamentals of rangeland health are identified in 43 CFR §§4180.1 and pertain to watershed function, ecological process, water quality, and habitat for threatened and endangered (T&E) species and other special status species. Based on the available data and professional judgement, the evaluation by this environmental assessment indicates that the conditions identified in the fundamentals of rangeland health exist on this allotment.

## **X. BLM Team Members**

Jim Schroeder, Hydrologist  
John Spain, Rangeland Management Specialist  
Tim Kreager, Area Manager, (reviewing for Hazardous Waste Specialist)  
Irene Gonzales-Salas, Realty Specialist  
Jerry Dutchover, Minerals Geologist  
Rand French, Wildlife Biologist  
Pat Flanary, Archeologist  
Jerry Ballard, Outdoor Recreation Planner  
Howard Parman, Resource Planner

### FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/RATIONALE

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT: I have reviewed this environmental assessment including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. I have determined the **proposed action** will not have significant impacts on the human environment and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

Rationale for Recommendations: The proposed action would not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation. The **proposed action** will be in compliance with the Roswell Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (October, 1997).

---

T. R. Kreager,  
Associate Field Office Manager - Resources

---

Date